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PAGE 12 Section B

BOOK OFFERS BIOGRAPHY OF AN ASSASSIN CULLED FROM OFFICIAL TESTIMONY Oswald's Alleged FBI Link Hurdle For Commission

By JAMES ROBINSON
Chicago Daily News Service

WASHINGTON — The Warren Commission had barely started its inquiry into President John F. Kennedy's assassination which members were summoned to an emergency meeting to consider a startling question.

Was assassin Lee Harvey Oswald an "undercover agent" on a secret payroll of the FBI?

"I cannot recall attending a meeting more tense and hushed," recalls Rep Gerald R. Ford, R-Mich., in a book to be published next month.

COMMISSION member Ford yesterday distributed advance copies of his book, "Portrait of the Assassin."

Written with the help of his special assistant, John R. Stiles, Ford's book is the only published account of the Warren Commission's investigation by one of its members.

It draws on the official transcript of the commission's still-secret executive sessions to provide a "behind-the-scenes" account.

Along with his description of the discussion regarding Oswald's alleged link to the FBI, which Ford labels "The Commission Gets Its First Shock," the congressman's book offers a biography of the assassin.

he emerged from several thousands pages of official testimony.

TO FORD, Oswald was a loner, a rebel in search of a cause.

In the words of the commission's official report, he had "the capacity to risk all in cruel and irresponsible actions."

"In Lee Oswald's own writings, his letters, essays and diary, he shouted this theme—I am not afraid to smash anything, even myself, if it serves my willful wishes," Ford says.

In many ways, Ford found Marina Oswald, Lee's Russian wife, even more incomprehensible than her husband.

"Of all the witnesses," he says, "Marina Oswald was perhaps the most difficult to deal with."

FORD DESCRIBES this under a chapter entitled "The Many Faces of Marina Oswald."

He says:

"There was one Marina Oswald while Lee was alive—the Marina who seemed to escape Lee's tyranny and yet could exclaim with undisguised enthusiasm, 'Papa loves us!' when the phone rang from New Orleans."

"And then there was another Marina when Lee died, who positively identified his rifle."

He concludes, "It was perhaps unfortunate that Lee Oswald married a young woman whose background was also less than ideal."

Ford's account of the commission meeting at which Oswald's alleged role as an FBI undercover agent was first considered suggests some of the difficulties in trying to pin down all the rumors spawned by the assassination.

ACCORDING to Ford, the allegations were brought to the commission's attention by Texas Atty. Gen. Waggoner Carr through a telephone call to J. Lee Rankin, the commission's general counsel.

"The dilemma of the commission was how to go about checking the allegation that the FBI was involved in this matter," Ford says.

Allen Dulles, former Central Intelligence Agency chief and a commission member, was asked for suggestions on how to proceed.

"This is a terribly hard thing to disprove," Dulles told the others.

"Let's take a specific case," Rep. Hale Boggs suggested. "That fellow Powers was one of your men."

"Oh, yes, but he was not an agent. He was an employee."

"THERE WAS no problem in proving he was employed by the CIA?"

"No, we had a signed contract."

Dulles pointed out that it would be more difficult with a true undercover agent because there would be nothing in writing.

Ford says this prompted Boggs to observe with some uneasiness, "What you do is to make out a problem, if this be true—make out problem utterly impossible, because you say this rumor can't be dissipated under any circumstance."

The commission decided to go beyond any mere statement by the FBI, the CIA or any other governmental security agency to the effect that Oswald wasn't in their employment.

It set out to try to prove, or disprove, the allegation.

It is Ford's contention, and that of the commission, that all the evidence established there was nothing to support the speculation.